

How does Street Art Cause Art Gentrification

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Abstract: The role of artists as upscaling pioneers and facilitators has been widely acknowledged and investigated. This research investigates the link between street art and urban upscaling. It investigates the history of art development in two distinct nations and areas, focusing on street art in Shoreditch, Hackney, and Chengdu, to expose the economic changes in communities that have emerged from art. The first section of the article defines art upscaling, distinguishes between street art and public art, and utilizes Lavapieres and Roxbury's "Roxbury Love" as an example to demonstrate the usual influence of art upscaling on communities. In the second half, the paper will examine whether street art invariably leads to gentrification, concentrating on economic developments in both areas.

Keywords: Art gentrification, Urban gentrification, Shoreditch, Hackney, Chengdu, Street art, Public art, Artists

1. Introduction

Tenants, particularly in metropolitan areas, are frequently subjected to increased rents as a result of community improvements and are compelled to leave in order for those who can afford to live there to do so if they are unable to pay. This is the process of displacement or regional revitalization brought about by gentrification.

The creation of art to raise the added value of the local area in the form of increased traffic, visibility, and popularity, resulting in the economic development of the surrounding neighborhood, leading to concerns such as increasing housing prices, is the foundation of art gentrification.

Among other things, one of the primary objectives of this article is to investigate if street art always leads to gentrification [1].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Gentrification

2.1.1. Definition, History, and Factors

"Once 'gentrification' starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the social character of the district is changed," says sociologist Ruth Glass, who coined the term to describe the transformation that took place in London in the early 1960s. Many of the same concepts, such as migration, wealth and class, social transformation, and a strong undercurrent of social justice, are still associated with the term "gentrification" today. Many people

think of gentrification as a process of displacement or regional rejuvenation, but Steve Holland believes it is simply the process by which lower-income areas are transformed when substantial numbers of higher-income inhabitants move in.

Most academics divide gentrification issues into three categories: supply-side factors, demand-side variables, and public policy. The theory behind supply-side considerations is that market forces lead the price of inner-city housing to decline to the point where outsiders are desirable to buy and convert to higher-value purposes. The circumstance that a rising number of individuals are interested in migrating to the core city is based on demand-side considerations. Tax rebates, mortgage programs, infrastructure building, and public housing restoration are examples of government policies and incentives.

2.2. Art Gentrification

2.2.1. Definition

Art gentrification happens when a region "improves" its look and feel via art, attracting a wave of higher-income people and raising local living costs. As older houses may be given "character" and "appeal," art can be regarded as a demand-side component.

There are three phases of art gentrification. The first wave is the creation of a milieu for art production; the second wave is the commodification and private consumption of the artistic milieu; and the third wave is the creation of landmark physical infrastructure for the arts, such as galleries, museums, and concert halls, with more explicit public-policy engagement and links to regeneration, public consumption of art. Public policy in the United Kingdom has begun to recognize the potential benefit of art and culture for both social and economic regeneration, albeit slowly[2].

2.2.2. Differences Between Street Art and Public Art

Street art and public art are the most common sources of art gentrification. The relationship between them is ambiguous.

PLF (Peter Ferrari) is inspired by the fleeting nature of graffiti, although he considers himself a public artist rather than a graffiti or street artist, and he is commissioned by both private corporations and people, locals still refer to him as a street artist since he uses spray paint. Public art is commissioned by cities or property owners and is regarded as culturally enriching and socially acceptable, whereas street art is rebellious in nature and unlawful in reality. The strange distinction between highbrow and lowbrow appears to be the difference between the two. Street art is unlawful, disorganized art without a budget, whereas public art has a buyer, an originator, and frequently has a curator, to put it simply [3].

The evaluation of street art, on the other hand, is subjective. It's a crime, according to Tucillo, if it's merely arbitrary tagging to scar property and identify someone's ego. But when you have a subjective emotion with wall painting, the unique emotion it gives offsets the intrinsic violation and makes you feel meaningful and beautiful [4].

It is a felony if street art infringes the building owner's rights by simply and obnoxiously marking the name; yet, it is good if it expresses spiritual ideals and beauty. One can change one's mind about street art at any time, but most people are accepting of public art.

2.2.3. Effects of Art Gentrification

Art can transform a community visually and spiritually pleasing, but it can also be used by capital to discourage local residents and attract high-income immigrants, leading to misery and the possibility of gentrification.

Property in Lavapiés, Madrid, Spain, generally ignores residents' low-quality houses with insufficient infrastructure. Developers hired artists to paint murals on the crumbling structures to enhance their physical look, thinking that the beauty of street art would turn a bleak and destitute neighborhood into a vibrant tourist destination. These street arts, as planned, contribute to the local economy by drawing higher-income people to lower-income regions, resulting in higher rents and the probable displacement of previously unaffordable inhabitants. Ivana Wijedasa recounts that when her class was on a street art tour down the town street to examine the artworks, a lady riding by on her bike noticed them and expressed concern that she would not be able to afford to live there owing to rising rent caused by visitors like them. For landlords, street art has evolved into a comprehensive tool for increasing revenue [5].

"Roxbury Love" is a black-and-white image of Nelson Mandela with block inscriptions on the background. At the crossroads of Warren and Clifford streets in Roxbury, Boston, this street art stretched across a low structure. "First and foremost, when I think of public art in Boston, I think of the Roxbury Love mural," Roxbury resident Rachel Domond lamented, "and the fact that it is being demolished is an example of cultural sites, specifically Black cultural sites, in Boston being completely eradicated, all for profit." Cruz Development's president and CEO, John B. Cruz, has responded by pledging to employ at least 75% people of color and 75 companies of color on the site, as well as working with the original artist to recommission the mural at or near the previous location. Later, Boston's chief of arts and culture, Kara Elliott-Ortega, expressed her opinion that, while the opportunity to notify the public was missed, Cruz Companies, Boston's oldest and largest minority-owned construction firm, has given a relatively positive response in terms of hiring employees and reconstruction. The contrast between citizens' dissatisfaction, as represented by Rachel, and the building company's compensating response illustrates the neighborhood's anti-upscale sentiment. As Amelia pointed out, the painting's demolition four years later sparked fears of gentrification and displacement in the predominantly Black area. Even if the demolition business tries to modify the essence of the deed by compensating individuals of color and repainting, demolishing a Boston icon that many people have observed for over four years is equal to destroying people's spiritual pillars. After all, the news isn't the original. While street art-based gentrification may not directly induce displacement, it does benefit capital by invading local art and culture and indirectly diminishing people of color's emotional belonging [6].

The art gentrification in Lavapiés and Roxbury was mostly part of the second phase of this creative milieu's commercialization and private consumption.



Figure1: Before its demolition, the "Roxbury Love" mural on Warren Street in Roxbury. (Joe Difazio for WBUR)

2.3. Research Gap

2.3.1. Why This Topic

Art plays a significant part in urban planning for community heritage and culture, community character and sense of place, community involvement, and economic development. First, art activities provide resources for maintaining a place's history and heritage while also promoting respect for the changing cultural landscape. Second, arts, culture, and creative techniques could help develop community variety and uniqueness while establishing and promoting community identity. Third, innovative tools could improve community participation by motivating individuals to learn, act, and provide feedback to form intimate bonds with their neighbors. Finally, the arts could draw people in and boost foot traffic. Furthermore, both official and informal arts instruction can aid in skill development[7].

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Area

3.1.1. Fangcao Street, High-tech Zone, Chengdu

Fangcao Street, High-tech Zone, Chengdu is located in the south of the city. The High-tech Zone is located within the Wuhou District. The district is bordered by Yulin North Road, Yulin Middle Road, Yulin South Road, and Xinguang Road to the east, High-tech Avenue to the west, Nansan Part, Yihuan Road South to the north, and Chengdu Shuang Airport Road to the south. It has a total population of over 100,000 people and includes seven communities. The GDP per capita of Wuhou District in 2021 is 184,000. This region has a large concentration of talent. According to data from Chengdu's seventh national census, the average years of education of the population aged 15 and above in Chengdu is 10.85 years, while High-tech Zone has 12.84 years and more than 358,501 bachelor's degree students, including 57,600 master's degree students and 0.59 million doctoral degree students., indicating that the majority of people in the High-tech Zone are middle-class.

Sheep CHEN created "Ci" on a big blank wall at 50 Shaziyan Middle Lane in Xin Neng village in 2019, including motifs of maternal love, children care, peace between people and animals, and Hua tan in Sichuan opera. "I believe mother's love is the most endless care offered by nature to children, so it is ideal to use it to represent children's care," CHEN said. "The style of the headdress also stems from a tale I heard as a youngster about a peacock adopting a baby swan." Moreover, the roses on the flower girl's hat in the artwork were inspired by getting flowers from a local. The mother-daughter mutual inclination gesture and Sichuan cultural features in this street art interact with passersby's sentiments of affection and local culture.

The middle lane of Shaziyan, where this work is located, is only 200 meters from the Yulin Bistro, a popular street in China, and close to Yulin West Road, so the surrounding environment should be quite vibrant and highly developed. As a result, this street art would boost the influx of people to the surrounding neighborhood and generate economic growth, resulting in gentrification.

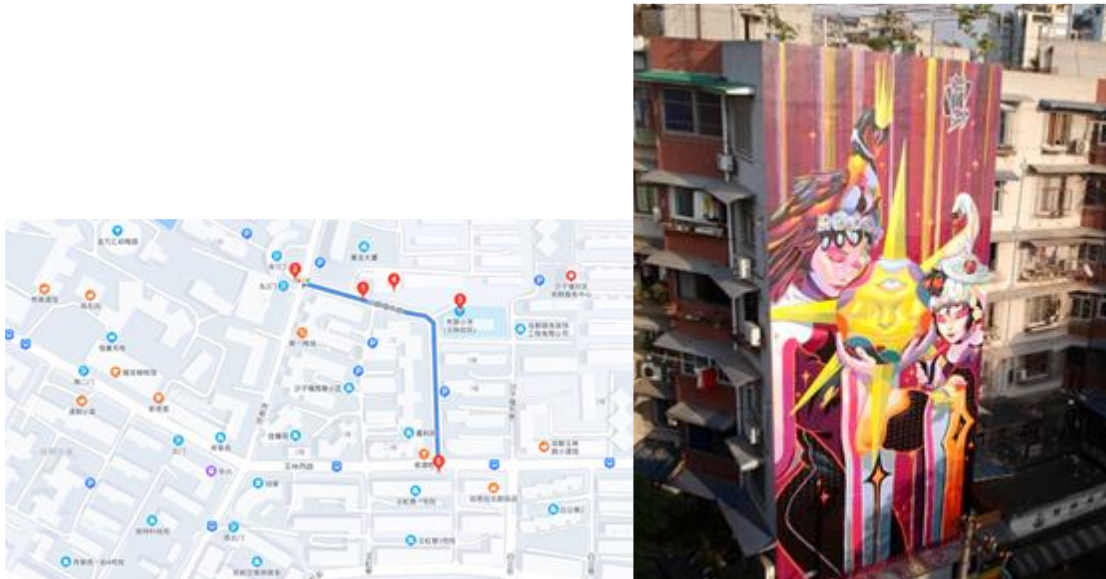


Figure2: “Ci” by Sheep CHEN. (Photographed by Sheep. Chen)

3.1.2. Shoreditch, Hackney, London

Shoreditch is a district in London's East End that is part of the London Borough of Hackney. It also includes neighboring areas of Tower Hamlets. Hoxton East and Shoreditch have a combined land size of 0.9303 km² and a population of 14,216 individuals[8], with an average annual salary of £32k in 2020[9].

Dale Grimshaw's recent paintings depict endangered indigenous people, mostly from West Papua New Guinea, and explore the relationship between tribal people and the increasingly callous profit-led world of globalization. His work is boldly figurative and inspired by his strong humanitarian beliefs. Those figures frequently collide against a backdrop of familiar symbols and signs from the Western world, creating a visually jarring effect that emphasizes our difference and their struggle[10]. The following piece of street art was created by Dale in 2018.

The portrait below is located at Village Underground a cultural hub in the Shoreditch area of London. It is loosely based on a Surma tribeswoman from Omo Vally, Ethiopia. Although her face is childish, her eyes in the white and red paint slits and her slightly closed lips reveal a hint of seriousness. The hands pressed against her breasts convey the same message, but with a shallow sense of vulnerability. The kindness and peace of nature are conveyed by the red roses in his hands and the large green leaves behind him. It is as if she is nervous about her first encounter with Western urban elements like concrete and steel high-rise buildings and asphalt-paved roads. Her body language conveys the youth of indigenous people who live deep in the forest[11].

Dale's collision of the two worlds creates a visual abruptness that highlights the differences and conflicts between the two lives, revealing globalization's intrusion and cultural erosion of indigenous people's lives.



Figure3: Street art by Dale Grimshaw (Photographed by Ursula Petula Barzey)

3.2. Art History

3.2.1. Fangcaojie Street, High-tech Zone, Chengdu

He Duoling, a well-known Chinese oil painter from Chengdu whose work "Spring Breeze Has Awakened" had received widespread attention the previous year, visited the Shaziyan neighborhood in 1994. It was still a Chengdu suburb at the time. There were only a few completed residential buildings, some under construction, and stretches of vegetable fields, with no decent restaurant, but this was exactly the type of place that artists liked. Zhou Chunyu was drawn in again by He Duoling's arrival. For a time, Zhou's "model" was a German shepherd named "Heigen," who inspired him to create the infamous series "Green Dog," which is regarded as the most distinctive of the "avant-garde art." The most recognizable symbol of "pioneering art."

Later, at the 22nd Sao Paulo Biennial, Zhang Xiaogang's "Bloodline: Large Family" was on display. This was the first time in the history of art that a "Chinese family photo" was displayed. Zhang Xiaogang was a pioneer in bringing Chinese contemporary art to the international stage, and he received numerous awards. He returned to China two years later and chose to live in Shaziyan. The artists were very enthusiastic about a bar that was being converted into a public living room at the time. They designed the logo and the exterior and named it "Xiaojiuguan (Bistro)."

The Xiaojiuguan (Bistro) was established in 1997. Since then, the Shaziyan neighborhood and Yulin West Road have evolved into a creative and humanistic environment that connects vertically and horizontally.

Every night, artists gathered in the bistro to drink and chat, sort out their thoughts, and spark inspiration from time to time in this modest space, which marked the start of their artistic careers' golden era. In addition to the Yulin neighborhood regulars, almost all of the contemporary art practitioners who have visited Chengdu in the last century, including almost every important name in the history of contemporary Chinese art, have come here.

The art at the Xiaojiuguan (Bistro) is not limited to painting, and music began to enter the Bistro's vision in 1998. Even though the establishment's original purpose had nothing to do with rock and roll, it once again became the cradle of pioneering music. The "White Night" bar opened in the second year of the Bistro's existence. People recited poetry, screened documentaries, held book launches, and held painting exhibitions in the bar, transforming White Night into an all-encompassing cultural space. Pioneering artists in Chengdu's high-tech zone began to experiment with new creative techniques in the twenty-first century, incorporating sculpture language into their oil paintings. Independent art spaces began to emerge as well. Pioneering artists had a place to show their work and tell their stories in their unique way, and the high-tech zone laid the groundwork for contemporary art. With its tall stance and distinct shape, architectural art began to catch people's attention. The Chengdu Tianfu Interchange and High-tech International Plaza then made their grand entrances. "The sense of openness, innovative ideas, and scientific craftsmanship are the core motives for the efficient and high-quality development of Chengdu High-tech Zone," said Qian Fang, the project's chief designer. Pioneering music has gradually coalesced into a force as an undercurrent of pioneering art. The Bistro welcomed the first foreign band to perform in 2000, and also assisted the band in publishing several musical works and providing a stage. As a result, Bistro and Underground Chengdu have been described as early movers and shakers in China's independent music scene. The Bistro Fangqin store opened in 2007. Since then, another stage for pioneering music has emerged in Chengdu's high-tech district. It was also the year Zhao Lei first performed the song "Chengdu" at the Bistro Fangqin store. Two large art galleries opened in Chengdu's High-tech Zone in 2011. The Wenxuan Art Museum's inaugural exhibition featured the most recent works of many top-tier artists. Chengdu Contemporary Art Museum's inaugural exhibition featured the works of 30 important Chinese contemporary artists, displaying a three-dimensional timeline of Chinese contemporary art.

The cultural and creative industries are also rapidly growing as a result of the nourishment of culture and art. At the moment, Chengdu Hi-tech Zone has gathered 209 above-scale cultural and creative industry enterprises, including Tencent, Kingsoft, tap4fun, MIGU Music, and others, who are involved in fields such as animation design, multimedia services, cultural supplies, game development, and exhibition display. In 2017, the added value of cultural and creative industries in Chengdu High-tech Zone was 18.5 billion yuan, an increase of 30.7% year on year; the added value of cultural and creative industries accounted for 11.1% of regional GDP and has become a dominant industry in the High-tech Zone[12].

3.2.2. Shoreditch, Hackney, London

Shoreditch is a district in East London. East London was a lower-income neighborhood known for its immigrant population before its renaissance. However, by the late twentieth century, the counterculture had flourished and more positive associations with the area had been formed[13].

The hip-hop and electronic music-filled streets of London gave birth to the street art movement. To avoid prosecution, street artists began tagging themselves with pseudonyms on almost every tube line. Even in 2019, many Britons consider street graffiti to be vandalism because it is an artistic expression of political protest. Even though still many people enjoy street art, it is technically illegal in the UK, and local authorities frequently try to conceal and cover up street art displays. However, Banksy's street art, which is often politically inspirational, has significantly altered the street art community and many people's perceptions of street art.

Since the popularity of street artists like Banksy, some artists have been commissioned to create works on the sides of individual buildings. This allows artists to create more elaborate and detailed works; some of the most complex can be found on the East End[14].



Figure4: Banksy, Girl With Balloon, London, UK, 2002 (Photographed by Charlotte Lydia Stace)

3.3. Gentrification Development

3.3.1. Income Changes

Due to CEIC data range constraints, the following Chengdu and Hackney population average income data was only captured from 2001 to 2012. The horizontal axis in this line graph is the year, and the vertical axis represents the average income of the entire population (the blue line is in pounds sterling and the orange line is in RMB). In general, both cities have a consistent tendency for income growth, with Hackney's being a straight line with an almost constant slope and Chengdu's being a slightly curved curve. Specifically looking, Hackney's growth slowed significantly in 2004, 2006, and 2008, but resumed its upward trend the following year, with the tendency gradually becoming more slanted in the years afterward. Conversely, Chengdu witnessed an initial hint of income growth in 2003, and while growth slowed in 2004, the slope continued to steepen, remaining on an ever-accelerating trajectory.

Hackney's per capita income increased from £26,320 to £42,690, whereas Chengdu's increased from \$8,181.6 to \$29,893.91[15][16]. The former has more than doubled in 12 years, while the latter has more than tripled, demonstrating Chengdu's rapid economic expansion.

Examine the UK's economic history during this period. While the economy has continued to develop since 2001, unemployment has climbed marginally to 1.6 million, and the UK continues to lose major manufacturing jobs as companies face financial difficulties or relocate production to lower-cost countries. The UK entered recession in the second quarter of 2008 and exited in the fourth quarter of 2009[17], according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), during which time unemployment rose from 5.2% to 7.6%[18], leading the British public to support the Conservatives more than the Labour Party. To deal with the large national debt created by the Labour Party, the new government had to substantially decrease public spending, which kept unemployment high. Despite a 0.8% increase in the third quarter of 2010, it did not show considerable improvement until 2013. In greater detail, the European debt crisis concentrated on Greece in 2010 caused stalled growth in the UK, but not a double-dip recession[19]. Although inflationary pressures eased and business confidence rose in the first half of 2012, productivity in the United Kingdom fell[20]. The UK economy grew for five consecutive quarters beginning in the second quarter of 2013[21], the longest

streak since the first quarter of 2008, aided by a resurgence in the housing market and robust growth in manufacturing and services.

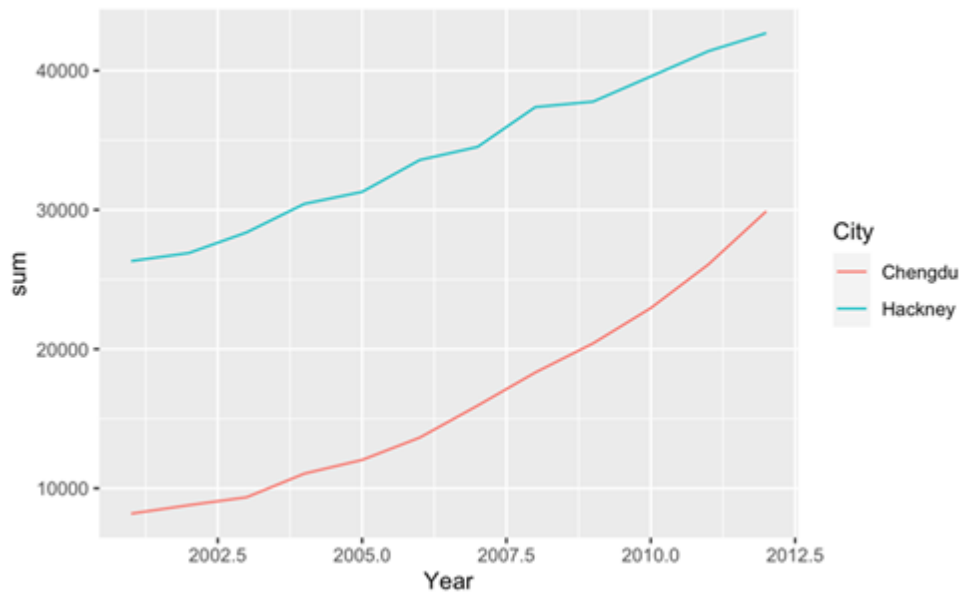


Figure5: Line graph of per capita income in Hackney and Chengdu

Hackney's art is rooted in the counter-mainstream culture that arose in the aftermath of Britain's political and economic crisis. The three twists and turns in its economic development were mostly driven by the aforementioned national economic turnarounds, such as rising unemployment, which reduced per capita income and slowed growth, prompting people to moan about hardships and struggles. Briefly stated, people's dissatisfaction with Britain's economic past spurred the development and popularity of British street art.

Chengdu's High-Tech Zone is located in the city's southern and western outskirts. The southern part of Chengdu's urban planning is a scientific, cultural, and educational area with a concentration of important universities, colleges, and research institutions, as well as a state-approved Chengdu High-Tech Development Zone, whereas the western part is a "Silicon Valley" with a Chinese medicine base and a living entertainment and trade zone. Infrastructure, sewage systems, landscaping, and other aspects of 21st Century Chengdu Urban Development are all moving quickly, with a commitment to speeding the city's modernization and placing real estate as a key pillar of the national economy[22].

Generations of trailblazing artists established the groundwork for the growth of art in Shaziyan, while the high-tech zone has accelerated the development of specialty art and cultural and creative industries, dramatically increasing Shaziyan's economic development.

Briefly stated, both Hackney and Chengdu's per capita income is increasing, and historical reflections explain the shifts.

3.3.2. Housing Price Changes

The units of the horizontal and vertical axes in this line graph are the same as in the preceding graph. In general, the difference in housing price changes between the two cities is marginal. The Hackney data fluctuate slightly, with a pattern of decreasing and then slightly increasing, whereas the Chengdu figure is relatively flat. The Hackney one shows a modest reduction in 2017 and slows down its rise in 2020, downing from £529,006 to £544,640, whilst the Chengdu one shows a very sluggish decline from 2018 onwards[23][24].

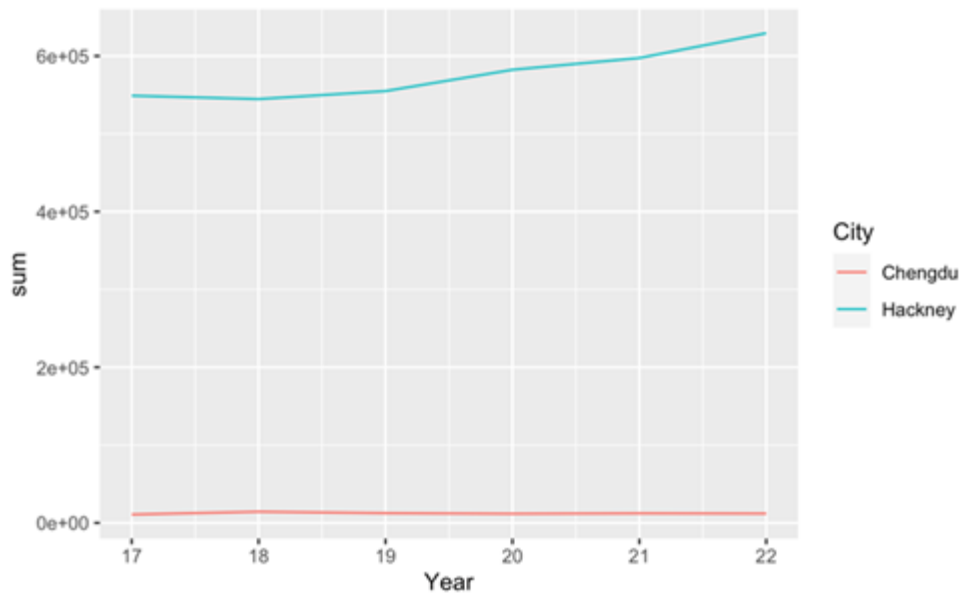


Figure6: Line graph of housing price changes in Hackney and Chengdu

The housing market in the United Kingdom began to recover in the second quarter of 2013, and salaries climbed faster than inflation for the first time in six years in 2014[25], allowing home prices to rise steadily until a little fall happened again in 2017. Dale's work of street art was completed in 2018, and property prices in Hackney have now moved away from the 2017 drop and into a multi-year trend of steady increase.

However, despite the fact that the volume of Chengdu's property market has expanded greatly since urbanization in the twenty-first century positioned real estate as a vital pillar industry of the national economy, housing prices in Chengdu have not risen significantly. It is clear that street art has had little influence on the local community. The underlying explanation for this is that, during the previous six years, the rate of industrial development has lagged behind the fast increase in population, resulting in a work climate that has involuted and produced a big difference in people's salary levels.

In short, Hackney's street art has had some influence on housing price increases, whereas Chengdu's has had less of an impact, but is more of a competitive work climate.

4. Conclusion

The political and economic instability of the UK generated a counterculture in Shoreditch, a formerly low-income neighborhood, that mirrored its own attitude toward street art. Rising unemployment and political developments during this time period fueled the popularity of street art even more. The active migration and mutual attraction of pioneering artists gave rise to the Shaziyan art scene, while the High-tech Zone in the city plan hastened the growth of art and economic development, luring street artists to the region.

The CEIC's summary of per capita income and housing price statistics for Hackney and Chengdu in the twenty-first century was turned into two separate line graphs using RStudio, demonstrating the economic impact of street art in both locations. The comparison of house price fluctuations better exposes the discrepancies because per capita income in both cities was expanding fast before either artwork was painted. The re-growth of housing prices in Hackney in 2018 coincides with the period when Dale made this street art, implying that street art was a factor, whereas house prices in Chengdu have been dropping very slowly since 2018, with no clear correlation with the timeframe of its

production in 2019. The key cause restricting housing price rise in the face of rising per capita income is pay disparities, not street art. Finally, art gentrification may have occurred in Shoreditch but not on Fangcao Street.

Restricted by the quarantine policy implemented in China under COVID-19, the authors were unable to visit Chengdu and Hackney to conduct fieldwork, visits, and interviews to obtain primary data, so all data in this paper are secondary internet data, which may be subject to statistical bias and information bias.

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